

Listen to the radio programme about tech addiction to practise and improve your listening skills.

Before listening

Do the preparation task first. Then listen to the audio and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. to scroll
2. to class
3. greyscale
4. vulnerable
5. to drop by
6. to exacerbate
7. a rush
8. baby boomers

Definition

- a. to visit informally for a short time
- b. to move information on a screen to see a different part of it
- c. a chemical reaction in your brain that makes things feel good
- d. black and white and the shades in between
- e. the generation currently in their late adulthood
- f. easily damaged or harmed; at risk
- g. to categorise; to name
- h. to make something worse

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Millennials spend more time on smartphones than any other generation.	True	False
2. Some people who work in the tech industry are fighting against smartphone addiction.	True	False
3. The presenter thinks most adults' behaviour towards their phones and apps is under control.	True	False
4. Babies' brain development is delayed because they're looking at screens.	True	False
5. We're likely to see a rise in teenage mental health problems because of social media addiction.	True	False
6. Changing the colour settings on your phone may make you spend less time on it.	True	False

Task 2

Match the expressions (1–6) with their meanings (a–f).

Expression

1. I'll hold my hands up to being one of those people.
2. They're not in their right mind.
3. It's a vicious circle.
4. Time to stage an intervention!
5. There are queues round the block.
6. They're sensitive to highs and lows.

Meaning

- a. It keeps getting worse and we can't break the pattern.
- b. We need to do something about this now.
- c. They experience emotions deeply.
- d. A lot of people are waiting.
- e. I confess that's something I do too.
- f. It's not a sensible way to behave.

Discussion

Are you addicted to social media or smartphones?

Transcript

Presenter: The sound of kids hanging out together. Or, at least, how it sounded a few years ago. Nowadays a group of, well, just about anyone – kids, teens, tweens, their parents – might sound a lot more like this ...

Most of us spend hours a day with our heads bent over our smartphones. Research suggests teenagers spend as many as nine hours a day, while pre-teens spend up to six.

Teen voice: I don't know, it's, like, the first thing I do in the morning, check in and see who's posted anything overnight. It's my alarm clock so I kind of have to look at it and then, you know, it's pretty hard not to scroll through.

Presenter: And it's not just teenagers and millennials, Generation X and even the Baby Boomers are almost as bad.

Adult voice: I'm online most of the day for work and you'd think I'd be sick of screens by the time I get home, but most of my news comes through Facebook and I'm really into food so I'll hold my hands up to being one of those people who posts photos of their meals.

Presenter: But are we addicted to our phones and apps? And does it matter? Former Google and Facebook employees certainly think so. So they've set up a non-profit organisation, the Center for Humane Technology, to reverse the digital attention crisis and promote safe technology for children.

Expert: Anyone who's seen queues round the block for the latest iPhone has to wonder what these people are thinking. You've literally got people sleeping in the street to get the newest device, probably not even talking to anyone else in the queue because they're on social media, taking selfies in the queue to post to Instagram. If that's not addiction, it's certainly obsession.

Presenter: A more formal definition of addiction describes it as a repeated involvement with an activity, despite the harm it causes. Someone with an addiction has cravings – that feeling that you haven't checked your phone for two minutes and can't relax until you get your hands on it again. They may have a lack of self-control and not realise their behaviour is causing problems – like texting while cycling or falling off a cliff taking a selfie. And, in case you're wondering, I read about both of those via the news app on my phone, which updates every couple of minutes with the latest stories ... definitely addicted. So the 'Truth about Tech' campaign by Common Sense Media and the Center for Humane Technology couldn't come fast enough for most of us. But it's children who are probably most at risk because of the effect tech addiction might be having on their brain development. Professor Mary Michaels of the Atlanta Future Tech Institute has been working with very young children. Mary, thanks for dropping by. What is your research telling us?

Mary: Well, we know that screen time is affecting key aspects of healthy child development, like sleep, healthy eating and what psychologists call 'serve and return' moments, which are when parents respond to babies seeking assurance and connection by making eye contact, smiling or talking. All perfectly normal things we do and which help lay the foundations of babies' brains. It's much harder to engage with a baby normally if you're looking at your phone. Or, even worse, if parents give a crying child a phone to distract them instead of

talking to them or hugging them, and that might lead to them failing to develop their ability to regulate their own emotions.

Presenter: And what about older children?

Mary: Again, we know that teenagers who spend a lot of time on social media are 56 per cent more likely to report being unhappy and 27 per cent more likely to suffer depression. Teenagers are especially vulnerable because they're more sensitive to highs and lows anyway, so we're looking at, potentially, higher instances of suicide, schizophrenia, anxiety and addiction in teens which is exacerbated by dependence on technology.

Presenter: It sounds like a vicious circle. They're more likely to get addicted to smartphones and social media and that addiction itself makes them candidates for other addictions.

Mary: Yes, that's right.

Presenter: Time to stage an intervention! Is there anything we can do to make tech less addictive?

Mary: Setting devices to greyscale, which is basically black and white, might make them less appealing. Scrolling through a newsfeed of boring, washed-out photos just doesn't create the same rush as bright colours perhaps. And you can turn off the notifications that are constantly pulling you back in to check your phone.

Presenter: So is it ...

Answers

Preparation task

1. b
2. g
3. d
4. f
5. a
6. h
7. c
8. e

Task 1

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. True

Task 2

1. e
2. f
3. a
4. b
5. d
6. c